

## Message Text

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FOLLOWING REPZPLGABVLHPTA 1870 SENT ACTION NEW DELHI

INFO BOMBAY/DACCA/KATHMANDU/MADRAS. DTD 12 AUG 75

QUOTE:

CALCUTTA 1870

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJ: CALCUTTA AND EASTERN INDIA IN THE SECOND MONTH OF THE

EMERGENCY: A FAVORABLE BALANCE SHEET FOR MRS. GANDHI

SUMMARY: IF A BALANCE SHEET WERE TO BE DRAWN UP FOR EASTERN INDIA AT THIS POINT IT WOULD BE DECIDELY IN MRS. GANDHI'S FAVOR. PEACE AND QUITE HAVE PREVAILED THOUGHOUT THE AREA AND THERE HAS BEEN NO PUBLIC CHALLENGE TO THE EMERGENCY ANYWHERE. THE GROUPS WE ARE ABLE TO REACH ARE FOR THE MOST PART BEGINNING TO GIVE THE EMERGENCY THEIR SUPPORT. THOUGH THERE ARE CRITICS HERE AS ELSEWHERE, IN CALCUTTA THEY SPEAK THEIR MINDS FREELY IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION, APPARENTLY WITHOUT FEAR OF ARREST. ON THE POLITICAL FRONT, THE CPM, CONGRESS' ONLY POTENTIALLY TROUBLESOME OPPONENT, SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN NEUTRALIZED. ALL THIS MAKES FOR AN ENCOURAGING SHORT TERM OUTLOOK FOR MRS. GANDHI AND THE CONGRESS GOVERNMENTS OF EASTERN INDIA. END SUMMARY.

1. AS THE SECOND MONTH OF THE EMERGENCY DRAWS TO A CLOSE,

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MRS. GANDHI AND HER CONGRESS GOVERNMENTS SEEM WELL AHEAD OF

THE GAME IN EASTERN INDIA.

2. WHAT HAS BEEN MOST IMPRESSIVE IS THE ALMOST TOTAL ABSENCE OF PUBLIC MANIFESTATIONS OF OPPOSITION TO THE EMERGENCY AND CENSORSHIP AND TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS AND LAWS THAT MRS. GANDHI HAS PUT THROUGH TO MAKE HER POSITION SECURE. PEACE AND QUIET HAVE PREVAILED THROUGHOUT EASTERN INDIA WITHOUT NOTICE-ABLE INTERRUPTION SINCE THE PROCLAMATION OF EMERGENCY ON JUNE 26. THERE HAVE BEEN NO DISORDERS AND NO PUBLIC CHALLENGE TO THE EMERGENCY. THE NUMBER OF ARRESTS IN THE PURELY POLITICAL CATEGORY HAS BY ALL ACCOUNTS BEEN SMALL; THE FIGURES WE HAVE ON THIS ARE SO ILL DEFINED AND VARYING THAT THEY ARE ALMOST MEANINGLESS, BUT IT IS CLEAR THAT IN WEST BENGAL AT LEAST THERE HAVE BEEN NO LARGE SCALE POLITICAL ARRESTS. THE SAME APPEARS TRUE ON ORISSA. APPARENTLY A MORE SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF PERSONS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED IN BIHAR, BUT GIVEN THAT STATE'S HISTORY AS A BREEDING GROUND FOR THE JP NARAYAN MOVEMENT THAT IS NOT REALLY SURPRISING.

3. WHAT IS SURPRISING IS THAT EXCEPT FOR A FEW MINOR DISORDERS IMMEDIATELY AFTER JUNE 26 BIHAR HAS BY ALL REPORTS BEEN TOTALLY QUIET. A TRAVELLER WHO RECENTLY CAME FROM BIHAR TELLS US THAT THE OPPOSITION THERE RECENTLY CIRCULATED LEAFLETS CALLING FOR A GENERAL STRIKE (BANDH) BUT FOUND NO RESPONSE AMONG THE POPULATION; THE SAME SOURCE SAYS THAT JANA YANTRA WORKERS ARE GETTING THE COLD SHOULDER IN THE TOWNS AND VILLAGES. THE NORTHEASTERN STATES AND TERRITORIES OF COURSE HAVE THEIR OWN PROBLEMS OF LOCAL INSURGENCY, AND THESE HAVE CONTINUED APPARENTLY WITHOUT BEING AFFECTED ONE WAY OR THE OTHER BY THE EMERGENCY.

4. THOUGH IT MAY NOT BE THE RESULT OF ANY POSITIVE ACTION ON THE PART OF CONGRESS, THE SITUATION IN EASTERN INDIA IS A BIG PSYCHOLOGICAL PLUS FOR CONGRESS. IT HAS BOLSTERED THE CONFIDENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S SUPPORTERS AND STRENGTHENED THEIR RANKS. MORE AND MORE PEOPLE WHO AT THE OUTSET DID NOT WANT TO TALK ABOUT THE EMERGENCY ARE NOW COMMENTING FAVORABLY ON IT TO US. THEY APPRECIATE THE QUIET AND ORDER THAT IT HAS BROUGHT (PARTICULARLY THE LABOR DISCIPLINE), THE DROP IN PRICES OF BASIC COMMODITIES THAT HAS ACCOMPANIED IT, AND THE INCREASE IN ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICIENCY. ON THIS LAST POINT BUREAUCRATS AND BUSINESSMEN ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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ALMOST ECSTATIC; GOVERNMENT WORKERS, THEY WAY, ARE COMING TO THE OFFICE ON TIME, STAYING FOR THE ALLOTTED PERIOD, AND DOING THEIR JOBS AS NEVER BEFORE. OF COURSE THE EMERGENCY HAS ITS CRITICS HERE AS ELSEWHERE. THESE ARE MOSTLY LAWYERS, INTELLECTUALS AND MIDDLE LEVEL BUSINESSMEN, BUT IN THE GROUPS WE ARE ABLE TO REACH THEY SEEM MUCH LESS NUMEROUS THAN THE SUPPORTERS. IT MAY BE TOO EARLY TO PROCLAIM A TREND, BUT OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT IN CALCUTTA AT LEAST PEOPLE ARE COMING DOWN OFF THE EARLIER QUOTE WAIT AND SEE

UNQUTE ATTITUDE AND ARE BACKING MRS. GANDHI. EVEN THE PRIME MINISTER'S LATEST ACTIONS IN LEGISLATING AWAY THE ALLAHABAD JUDGMENT AND PLACING HERSELF ABOVE THE LAW DO NOT SEEM TO HAVE CAUSED WIDESPREAD CRITICISM.

5. APPARENTLY BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF SUBSTANTIAL OPPOSITION AND THE PUBLIC'S GENERALLY FAVORABLE ATTITUDE, THE AUTHORITIES IN WEST BENGAL AT LEAST HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TREAD LIGHTLY. WHILE THE PRESS TOES THE CENSORSHIP LINES VERY STRICTLY, CALCUTTANS SPEAK THEIR MINDS FREELY IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS, APPARENTLY WITHOUT MUCH FEAR OF ARREST. PEOPLE HERE TALK ABOUT THE QTE ATMOSPHERE OF FEAR UNQTE THAT PERVADES NEW DELHI AND CONTRAST IT WITH THE RELATIVE FREEDOM FROM FEAR THAT THEY ENJOY. OF COURSE THIS COULD CHANGE MOMENTARILY, BUT FOR NOW A RELATIVELY RELAXED ATMOSPHERE PREVAILS IN CALCUTTA. NOBODY SEEMS TO FEEL THE NEED TO LOOK OVER HIS SHOULDER BEFORE SPEAKING.

6. AS WE HAVE NOTED ABOVE AND IN OTHER REPORTS, IT IS THE BUREAUCRATS (BOTH IN GOVERNMENT AND IN GOVERNMENT-OWNED ENTERPRISES) WHO ARE THE MOST ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE EMERGENCY. CABINET OFFICERS AND SENIOR OFFICIALS WHOM WE SEE THESE DAYS INVARIABLY MOP THEIR BROWS AND COMPLAIN--WITH EVIDENT DELIGHT--ABOUT HOW HARD THEY HAVE BEEN WORKING SINCE THE EMERGENCY. IT IS THE END OF THE ERA OF PERMISSIVENESS AND THE SOFT STATE, THEY TELL US, AND NOW A JOB CAN BE DONE. THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CALCUTTA PORT, B.C. MITRA, WHOSE ENTERPRISE CAN PROBABLY VIE WITH ANY IN INDIA FOR INEFFICIENCY AND FEATHERBEDDING (WE REALIZE THIS IS SAYING A GOOD DEAL) FOR THE FIRST TIME SEES A POSSIBILITY OF BREAKING THROUGH THE ACCUMULATED MORASS OF THIRTY YEARS. BUREAUCRATS AND BIG BUSINESSMEN ALIKE SEE THE EMERGENCY AS A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TO ESCAPE THE LABOR AND LEGAL CONSTRAINTS WHICH THEY FEEL HAVE SO SERIOUSLY DAMAGED THEIR OPERATIONS.

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4. IF A BALANCE SHEET WERE TO BE DRAWN UP FOR EASTERN INDIA AT THIS POINT IT WOULD BE DECIDELY IN MRS. GANDHI'S FAVOR. HERE AS ELSEWHERE IN INDIA THE WEATHER IS COOPERATING? THE RAINS HAVE BEEN GOOD IN THIS AREA AND WHILE THEY ARE A LITTLE DEFICIENT IN SOME SPOTS A GOOD CROP IS EXPECTED. ON THE POLITICAL FRONT, THE CPM--CONGRESS' ONLY POTENTIALLY TROUBLESOME OPPONENT-- SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN NEUTRALIZED; IT HAS REMAINED TOTALLY QUIESCENT SINCE THE EMERGENCY AND IN TURN THE AUTHORITIES HAVE REFRAINED FROM ARRESTING ANY OF ITS SENIOR LEADERS (THE CPM POLITBURO RECENTLY MADE A GROUP APPEARANCE AT A JOINT CPI-CPM COMMUNIST RALLY IN NORTH CALCUTTA). THERE MUST BE MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE TO THIS, AND WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT A DEAL HAS BEEN STRUCK SOMEWHERE BEHIND THE SCENES.

8. ALL THIS MAKES FOR AN ENCOURAGING SHORT TERM OUTLOOK FOR

MRS. GANDHI AND THE CONGRESS GOVERNMENTS OF EASTERN INDIA.  
THE LONG TERM OF COURSE IS A DIFFERENT MATTER, AND WHETHER THE  
FACT THAT THE TRAINS NOW RUN ON TIME AND THE STATIONS ARE RELA-  
TIVELY CLEAN AND RELATIVELY FREE OF BEGGARS AND DESTITUTE  
WIL MUCH AFFECT IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN. RIGHT NOW, HOWEVER,  
THESE THINGS ARE SO MUCH A NOVELTY THAT PEOPLE HERE SEEM TO  
FIND THEM MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE POLITICAL AND PERSONAL  
FREEDOMS THAT HAVE BEEN LOST.  
KORN

UNQUOTE.  
SAXBE

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